



THIS IS THE BARBARIAN HORDE OF FANATICAL DERVISHES THE BRITISH ARMY IS MOVING AGAINST IN THE SOUDAN.

THE British are moving on the Nile toward the Soudan. Abdulahi, the Khalifa, successor of the Mahdi, stands in the centre of the Soudan, surrounded by 200,000 warriors—waiting.

Do you realize the meaning of all this? It is no ordinary intelligence that these words convey. It is the announcement of an impending conflict the like of which has not been seen since Waterloo.

There will be no war. It will be a terrible, protracted, epoch-making slaughter. On the trackless sands of that wide, wide desert, there will be a fearful struggle between Civilization and Barbarism, a royal combat between enlightenment and fanatic savagery, a combat in which the children of the soil have everything to lose and nothing but a few years' respite to gain.

For ten years the Soudan, the mysterious, boundless Soudan has been a sealed book to the world. What has transpired within its confines, the struggles of its many tribes, its wars and its woes for all these years are unknown to civilized man. Once upon a time the Soudan came within what diplomats call the "sphere of influence" of Great Britain. But one day the savage tribes of the desert gathered around their leader, the great Mahdi, and proclaimed a religious war against the British. And the British, caught in a trap, were crushed.

How those Mahdists fought! Like the waves of the ocean they rolled in numberless, endless ranks against the British front, eager to be killed that they might enter Paradise. The British fought like heroes. Line after line of the oncoming forces was mowed to the ground. But for each Mahdist that fell ten seemed to spring from the ground; they swarmed upon the British, and with loud, exultant cries overwhelmed them. And so the Soudan was removed from the British "sphere of influence."

At the end of this road it is their intention to establish a strong garrison which in all future operations will be a base of supplies and a safe point upon which to fall back. This garrison will be completed before two months have passed. In the fall shipped after shipment of troops will be transported to Cairo, whence they will make their way to this fortification.

The Khalifa is a wily diplomat. He has been informed of the doings of the British and he understands their significance. He has already declared a Holy War against them. His people are inflamed with religious zeal.

The British soldiers are going to meet the same men who crushed their predecessors. And what do they bring to the fray that their predecessors lacked? The only difference between this expedition and the expedition that was annihilated lies in the machine guns that will be brought. Upon these guns, which are the product of military skill of the past ten years, the outcome will depend. The British must pour streams of bullets into the mass of infuriated fanatics until the last of them expires. If the machine guns break down and the invaders must stop and reload their ordinary rifles, they lose. Surrender—there will be no surrender. Every Mahdist will be killed or the British expedition will be wiped out of existence.

The Dervishes after ten years of unquestioned possession of the Soudan are strong in numbers and aggressive.

They seek death in battle, which they think at once translates them to a heavenly realm. They have therefore a kind of courage superior to that of any Europeans.

The Dervishes outnumber any army that can be sent against them more than twenty to one. They are armed and equipped with modern weapons and follow a system of tactics well adapted to the desert.

The Dervishes have many extraordinary beliefs. They are ascetics and believe in self-denial and sacrifice.

One body of the Dervishes roll head over heels on the desert for a distance of 100 miles. They do this as a religious duty.

Other Dervishes contemplate the tip of their nose from eighty-four different positions. Meanwhile they think of spiritual things.

Dervishes strip to the skin when they go into battle. They rush to where the bullets are thickest.

The whirling Dervishes are a branch of this fanatical sect living in Turkey. They wear long robes and do a skirt dance.

The howling Dervishes can be heard for many miles. They never do any work, and are the beggars of the desert.

The Dervishes are dark-skinned, almost black, but with straight hair. Most of them are thin from fasting.

The Dervishes are found in many thousands about Khartoum. Most of them are fat, and they shave the head.

A dance of the howling Dervishes is one of the weirdest spectacles which a European can witness by a camp fire on the desert. They work themselves into paroxysms and frequently succumb to the excitement. This is the ghost dance of the Soudan.

The Dervishes have many petty chiefdoms. Among these are emirs and sheiks, but all yield allegiance to the Khalifa.

If a Dervish looks the Khalifa in the eye his head is at once removed by the stroke of a sword.

To speak to the Khalifa without being first addressed means death.

The Khalifa has more than four hundred wives. Some of these he captured when Khartoum fell.

The Khalifa had for a time an official reporter of his theories, whom he inherited from El Mahdi, and who wrote many volumes praising his master. One day this chronicler was heard to say that he was an indispensable man, and for this he lost his head.

El Mahdi issued a proclamation to the Dervishes commending the Khalifa. In this he said: "The Khalifa Abdulahi is the representative of the righteous. He is guarded by the Khidr and strengthened by God and his Prophet. Believe in him. Obey his orders. Never doubt what he says."

Even the Mahdi at the height of his power, when he wrested the Soudan from its foreign rulers, captured Khartoum and compelled the English to retire, was never so powerful as the Khalifa is to-day. The latter enforces his orders by the most rigorous methods and will brook no opposition.

He maintains a state of terror under the name of discipline by executions which are almost daily carried out. Many instances of his despotic rule are given by Slatin Pasha in his book "Fire and Sword in the Soudan."

Among all the tributaries of the Nile the Khalifa's word to-day is law. He holds the Soudan in the hollow of his hand.

The Khalifa is wily. He is not alone a warrior, but a diplomat. He has himself surrounded by several independent sets of spies, all reporting to him in person and each watching the other.

He tells his fanatical followers that he hears every word that is spoken. He even claims to be able to read their thoughts, little as the thoughts of a howling Dervish would be worth.

The Khalifa keeps his harem guarded by eunuchs. But even these he distrusts. He employs a large number of young boys, who, he says, are guileless and honest, while grown-up people are given to deception.

The Khalifa pretends to possess supernatural powers. He tells his followers that he receives commands from heaven, and that he knows what is going on in the other world. He has even produced messages, which he said were given him by the Mahdi since his death.

During the lifetime of the Mahdi the Khalifa was his right-hand man. For a year or more before the fall of Khartoum the Khalifa was everywhere with the Mahdi, who was reluctant to leave him his presence. He possessed a strange power over the Mahdi.

The Khalifa is now fifty years of age. At times the expression of his face is one of amiability, but generally it is one of darkness, showing tyranny and unscrupulous resolution. He is rash and quick-tempered, and even his own brother is afraid of him.

There is hardly any limit to his pride. He speaks contemptuously of the Khedive as "a mere Turk." The Khalifa's character is a mixture of malice and cruelty, and he is regarded as responsible for the severity of the Mahdi's proceedings.

It was the Khalifa who gave the order for "No quarter" at the fall of Khartoum. He is believed to have ordered the killing of Chinese Gordon.

The Khalifa is ignominious. Slatin Pasha tells how a man came to him claiming to be able to make lead, which the Khalifa wanted for bullets for his followers. When the man failed to make the lead the Khalifa had his right hand and left foot cut off in the market place.

Persons entering the presence of the Khalifa must stand with their hands crossed on their breasts and their eyes lowered to the ground awaiting his permission to be seated. In his audience chamber he sits on an amrah, over which a palm mat is spread, and his sheepskin stretched out on it, while he leans against a large roll of cotton cloth which forms a pillow.

When those brought before him are allowed to be seated, they take up a position as if praying, with their eyes on the ground. In this posture they answer the questions put to them, and dare not move until permitted to do so. The Khalifa is afraid to have people look at him, and is a believer in the evil eye, which he says causes illness and misfortune.

The Khalifa's eldest son is named Osman. He is now twenty-two years old, and has been instructed in all the commentaries of the Koran by able Mohammedan teachers. When seventeen years old Osman was married to his cousin, the daughter of his uncle Yakub.

The Khalifa has since selected many other wives for his son, and has disposed in this way of numerous female relations. Osman started in to be a high-roller, and held nightly orgies in his house, but as soon as the Khalifa heard of it he built a house for Osman's close to his own, where he could have him constantly under his eye.

The Khalifa hated Mohammed, the son of El Mahdi. So he married his daughter to him. Mohammed wanted to marry another girl, but the Khalifa, being the guardian of the young man, compelled him to obey his will. Mohammed got a divorce, but the Khalifa compelled him to take his wife back.

In accordance with Mohammedan law, the Khalifa has four "legal" wives, but he never hesitates to divorce them at will and take others. Meanwhile he has over 500 other wives.

When tired of any one of these, he has a habit of presenting her as a high compliment to one of his subordinates, who must look pleased and accept the gift with gratitude. The tribe is whipped and the girls and women are taken as booty and the Khalifa's favorite.

While Slatin Pasha was with him he wanted Slatin to marry many women.

The ladies of the Khalifa's harem vary in color from light brown to the deepest black, and comprise every tribe in the Soudan. They are divided into groups of from fifteen to twenty, presided over by a superior, and two or three of these groups are placed under the orders of a free woman.

A certain amount of grain and money is granted monthly to the superiors for the support of their charges. They also receive the necessary cosmetics, consisting of various sorts of oils, grease and scent.

The most beautiful woman in the Khalifa's harem has the finest clothes, and the less favored are more plainly dressed. They wear mostly native-woven cotton cloth, with parti-colored borders of bright silk or woolen shawls imported from Egypt. These are always distributed by the Khalifa himself, or by his chief eunuch.

The Mahdi prohibited the wearing of silver jewelry, and the women of the Khalifa mostly wear mother-of-pearl buttons and oblong strips of red coral and onyx. These are threaded together and worn round the wrists, ankles and head.

A few of the Khalifa's favorites, however, wear gold and silver. They live in detached houses, something like barracks surrounded by courts and enclosed by high walls. Special women are maintained to watch over their health and are obliged to report to the Khalifa from time to time. Occasionally he holds an inspection or review of his entire household. The spectacle of the Khalifa reviewing his 400 wives is an inspiring one. His poor relations come in for ex-favorites at these times.

Thus the harem is being constantly weeded out and being constantly replenished with fresh young faces, while the Khalifa is relieved of the support of his fallen favorites. There is much dread among the Khalifa's poor relations when these reviews approach, for fear they will be loaded down with useless wives. But even these men have retainers of their own, to whom they quietly pass on any woman especially ill-favored by fortune.

The harem courts are carefully guarded by eunuchs and black muzamezin, or common soldiers. It would be instant death to watch over their health and are obliged to report to the Khalifa from time to time. Occasionally he holds an inspection or review of his entire household. The spectacle of the Khalifa reviewing his 400 wives is an inspiring one. His poor relations come in for ex-favorites at these times.

Outside of these he has an immense army. This is supplied by the Emirs of the different provinces, and represents every tribe of the Soudan. The Dervishes are the most numerous of these, being divided into various corps, some of which ride camels, others being on horseback, while others still are on foot.

With the fall of Khartoum the last vestige of European control of the Soudan disappeared, and the entire country relapsed back into barbarism. Not long afterward the Mahdi died. The Khalifa immediately took his place, and has since strengthened his power as ruler of this immense territory.

terly the Khalifa has been becoming a high-liver himself, and many of his favorites have introduced him to dishes cooked by them according to the Turkish or Egyptian methods.

The Khalifa employs twenty eunuchs, the chief of whom is Abdel Gayum. This individual has strong influence with the Khalifa, and employs a staff of clerks and servants to aid him in running the harem.

The Khalifa wears a jilba made of super-fine white cotton cloth, with a colored border, loose cotton drawers, and on his head a beautifully made mecca silk skull-cap, around which a small white turban is wound. Around his body is a narrow strip of cotton, about five yards long, called a wassan, and a light shawl of the same material is thrown across his shoulders. He formerly wore sandals, but lately has taken to wearing soft leather stockings of a light brown color, with yellow shoes.

When walking, the Khalifa carries a sword in his left hand and in his right a beautifully worked Hadendoo spear. This he uses as a walking stick.

The Khalifa has a personal body guard of 12,000 men, recruited from the best families, but from which all Dargalas and Egyptians, in whom he has no confidence, are excluded. Almost all of these are armed with Remington rifles.

The soldiers are paid promptly half a Dervish dollar and one-fourth of an ardeb of durra. The grain is received regularly, but the cash never appears. The Emirs are highly paid and receive frequent gifts of women and slaves from the Khalifa.

The body guard of the Khalifa is subdivided into three corps, under the respective commands of his son, Osman; the Khalifa's young brother, Harun Abu Mohammed, who is barely thirteen years of age, and his cousin, Ibrahim Khalil, who has been recently replaced by an Abyssinian named Rahab, who was brought up in the Khalifa's household.

The corps are subdivided again into sections of one hundred men, over each of which an officer has command.

Then there are the hosts of black soldiers of the Khalifa. These are called the Jehadia, and they are under the special command of the Emirs. The muzamezin and the body guard protect the person of the Khalifa.

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